9:Steglitter M-4, 5 (no date)1928 AR7 Khasi AR7

THE MARKET LIFE OF THE KHASI

(DAS MARKTLEBEN DER KHASI)

by P. F. Steglitter

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[Title page]

[703]

The Market Life of the Khasi
(With ten original photographs by the author)
by P.F. Stegmiller, S.V.D., Munich

The mountains in the northeast corner of India which lie between the valleys of the Brahmaputra and the Barak are inhabited by a tribe, the Khasi, numbering about 200,000 people. Although they rarely cross the borders of their homeland and live almost cut off from their neighbors, they have an active traffic amongst themselves and travel a lot. This traveling is determined by the very distinct market life of the Khasi. It is truly the pulse beat of the people. The rest of their homelife, their activities, and their private, public, and religious life. (1) Time is divided according to the market; the market replaces the daily newspaper and the information service; the market unites the individual villages; the market offers a living to many and for many has become a source of wealth.

1. P.F. Stegmiller, "Aus dem religiösen Leben der Khasi" [The Religion Life of the Khasi], Anthropos, 1921-1922, pp. 425 ff.

How much the Khasi depend on a thriving market may be seen in their prayers which are spoken every year at the great state sacrifices in honor of the god Shillong by the sacrificer (lyngdoh) presenting the service: "O god, Shillong! Thou who receivest this prayer, this sacrifice of goats, of fowl, of kpu and rynsi (a kind of bread of rice flour or cornmeal with pounded sugar), of utensils used in the preparation, as thou has given them to the royal

race, so that once in every year a sacrifice 443
can be celebrated in thy name, so that we will 782
live happily and be healthy and increase in numbers, so that kings will arise, the markets will enjoy progress and success, and the children of the kingdom will spread out and increase in thy name and to thy honor."

After this prayer the chief sacrificer (lyngdoh rangbah) pours rice liquor (ka kiad um) out of a gourd bottle (u klong) onto the ground in honor of the goddess of the markets (ka blei jeu lei hat) and prays thus: "Hear us, o goddess, so that the markets will be good and safe and everything be blessed, so that the kingdom will progress and develop,mo (is it not so)!" (2)

2. P.F. Stegmiller, "Opfer und Opferbräuche der Khasi"/Sacrifice and Sacrificial Customs of the Khasi/, Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien"/Proceedings of the Vienna Anthropological Society/, Vol. LIV (1924).

/704/ Among the Khasi, the women /The Market 443
Personnel/ are so in the majority among the 462
selling personnel that it is tempting to consider them the founders of the markets. Since provisions form the chief articles of the market, and these are grown by the women, this may be the reason why the woman dominates the market. The masculine element certainly participates actively in the market, but only dealing in such articles as belong to him specially, such as dishes of iron which he has made or goats and sheep which he has raised. Although the men as an average only go to

443 462 market for pleasure, I cannot agree with the view, (3) that they would consider market busi-

3. P.C. Becker, S.D.S., Salvatorianische Mitteilungen /Salvatorian Communications/, 1911, No. 4, p. 60.

ness beneath their dignity, if they had a wife or a grown girl (daughter) at home, to whom they could turn over this business. Not because the men would consider the business of the market beneath their dignity, but because the market is once and for all the preferred business of the women, men stay away from the market. If men are rarely seen offering provisions for sale, they are more frequently seen bringing the provisions to the women at the market. The men only sell personally birds they have caught themselves. Thus if the buying and selling of things is the business of the Khasi women, this position is not a subordinate and shameful one but a well established and dominant one.

2. The Market Wares

443 438 Food provisions are the chief items at the Khasi markets. Sold are: rice (khau), dried fish (doh kha), potatoes (phan), sugar cane (u pai), an edible root which is eaten raw (u soh phlang; botanical name: flemingia vestita Benth); Job's tears (u soh rieu; botanical name coix lachryma Jobi); Italian millet (u 'rai son, botanical name: setreria italica); blood millet (u 'rai shan, botanical name: paspalum sanguinale); spadix millet (u 'rai truh, botanical name: eleusine Coracana); Khasi beans, two [illegible] (u rymbai ja, botanical name: paseolus

calcaratus) and (u rymbai ktung, botanical name: glycine soja); corn (u 'rieuhadem); pineapple (u soh trun); lemons (u soh myndong); oranges (u soh niamtra); mangoes (u soh pieng); melons (u pathau); breadfruit (u soh kpu, botanical name: artocarpus incisa); Khasi cherries (u soh jong, botanical name: prunus ferrunginea); bananas (ka kait), pepper (u soh mrit); chilis (u soh myngken); papayas (u soh kynphor, botanical name: carica papaya); a kind of wild potato (u soh pyrsiu); cinnamon (ka sisia, botanical name: cinamum cassia); nutmeg (u joi phol); ginger (u 'sieng); honey in honeycombs (ka ngap). 443 438

Goats, sheep, and cattle are sold, sometimes alive, sometimes slaughtered in small quantities. There are many chickens on the market, especially for sacrificial purposes.

In addition things are brought for sale that are necessary for the construction of houses or the cultivation of fields, such as grass for roofing huts; cut beams, bamboo poles, bamboo plaited into lattice work, dried cow manure, spades for the fields (mokhiu); Khasi knives (ka wait); /704: A/1/P.W. Schmidt-Festschrift. Photo: P. Fr. Stegmiller. Market Troupe. They go in groups for fear of murderers (thleng owners)./ /704: B/1/P.W. Schmidt-Festschrift. Photo: P. Fr. Stegmiller. A woman, carrying beans, on the way to the market at Cherrapunji./ /704: C/1/P.W. Schmidt-Festschrift. Photo: P. Fr. Stegmiller. Going towards Laban to the market with potatoes. The "umbrella" is placed between the back and the burden./ /704: D/1/P.W. Schmidt-Festschrift. Photo: P. Fr. Stegmiller. On the way to Laban to the market with sugar cane./ /704: E/1/P.W. Schmidt-Festschrift. Photo: P. Fr. Stegmiller. Khasi traveling to the market in dugouts./ [484] [482]

1/ [See plates, category 06, pp 5-9-- Analyst]

5:Stegmiller--5 M-4,5(no date)1928 AR7 Khasi AR7

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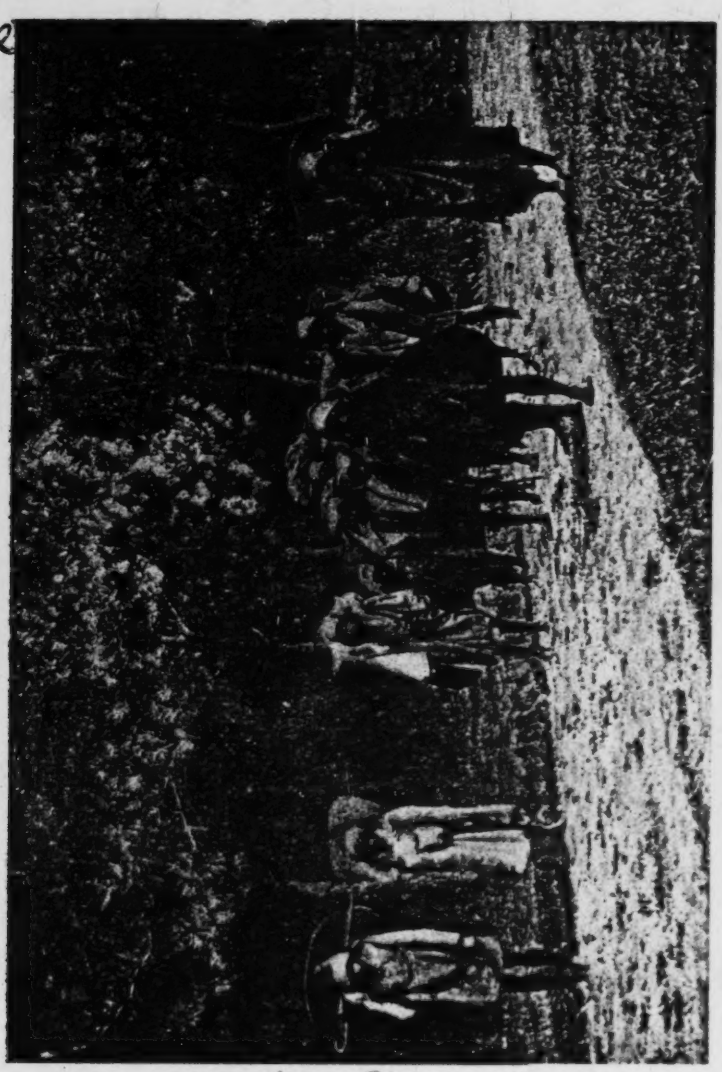

[market troupe]

[704 A7]

5:Stegmiller--6 M-4,5(no date)1928 AR7KhasiAR7

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[A woman carrying beans on the way to the market at Cherrapunji]

[704 B]

5:Stegmiller--7 4,5(no date)1928 AR7KhasiAh

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[Going toward Laban to the market with potatoes.]

[7040]

5:Stegmiller--8 M-4,5(no date)1928 AR7KhasiAR7

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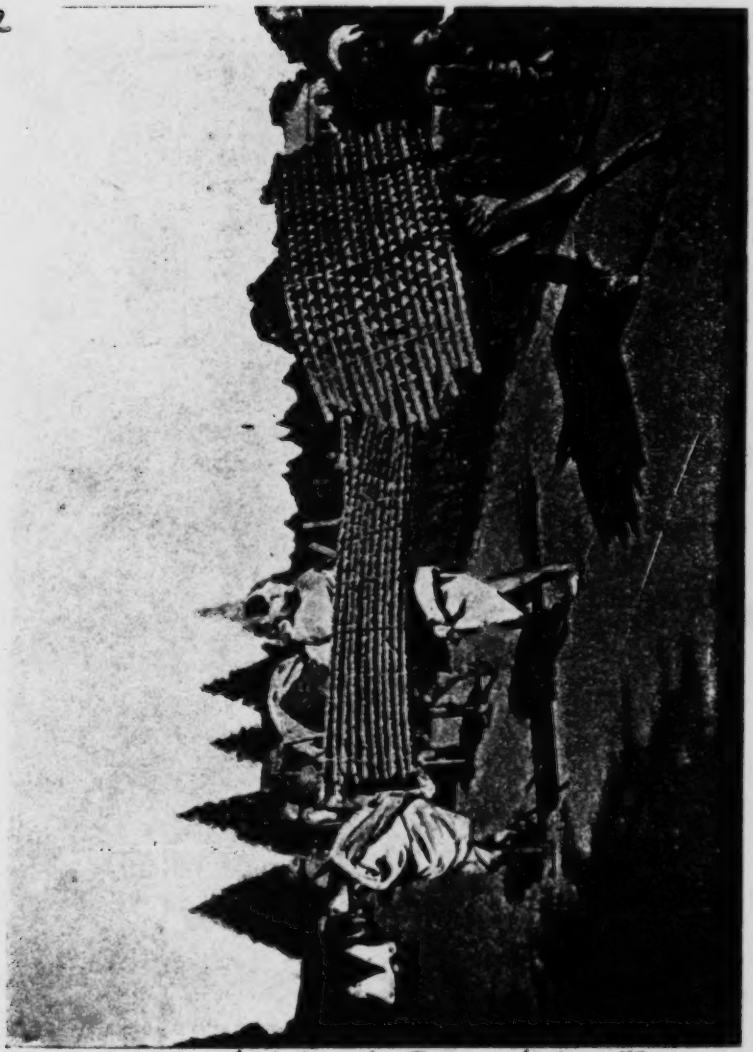

[On The way to Laban to The market with sugar cane]

[704D]

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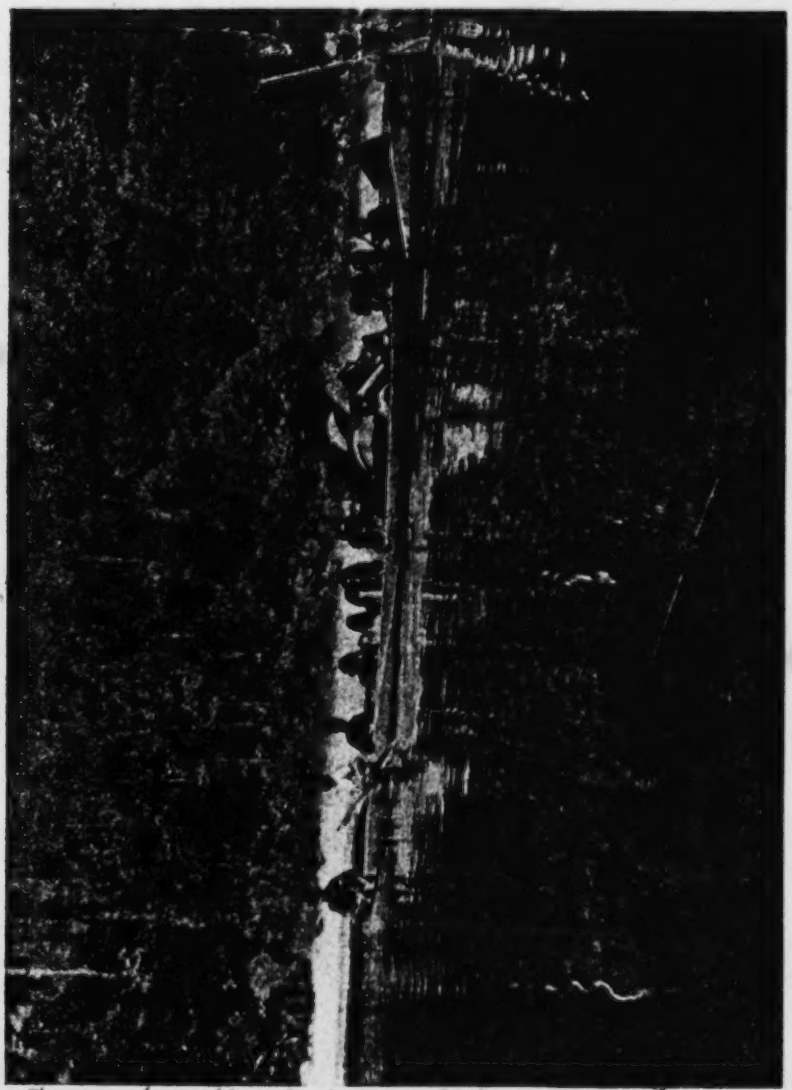

[Khasi traveling to the market in dugouts]

[704 E]

443 /704: F/1 /P.W. Schmidt-Festschrift. Photo:
438 P. Fr. Stegmiller. Market Place in Shillong./ /704: G/1 /P.W. Schmidt-Festschrift. Photo: P. Fr. Stegmiller. Market Place in Shillong: Selling meat./ /704: H/1 /P.W. Schmidt-Festschrift. Photo: P. Fr. Stegmiller, Market Place in Shillong: round chicken coops./ /704: I/1 /P.W. Schmidt-Festschrift. Photo: P. Fr. Stegmiller. Market Place in Daukhi./ /704: J/1 /P.W. Schmidt-Festschrift. Photo: P. Fr. Stegmiller. Market Place in Laitkynsew^ Material for roofing./ /705/ plaited baskets in all sizes , waterproof plaited containers, carrying baskets (tappa), bands for the forehead (u star), drinking cups of bamboo, gourd-bottles, wooden mortars, water pipes made of cocoanuts, pipe bowls made out of clay and dried in the sun, plates and saucers of brass, cooking pots of iron, and earthern dishes; everything is the work of the Khasi.

Recently European wares, such as loin cloths, stockings, caps, combs, mirrors, mouth harmonicas, matches, and cigarettes are also seen in larger amounts.

443 At the markets of the Khasi not only food-
464 stuffs and other things necessary for life may
445 be obtained, but workers are also hired there. Whoever wishes to hire himself out goes to the market and stands around, hoping to find some kind of work for the coming (market) week. Day laborers can only be hired at the market. Therefore it is hard during the week to get any kind of a worker. It is also necessary when hiring a t the market to hire the worker for the whole "market week," i.e., until the next market day, as the coolies otherwise would have a hard time finding work and would not accept the work at all for only one or two days. The porters needed for traveling

[1] [See plates, category #6, pp 11-15--Analyst]

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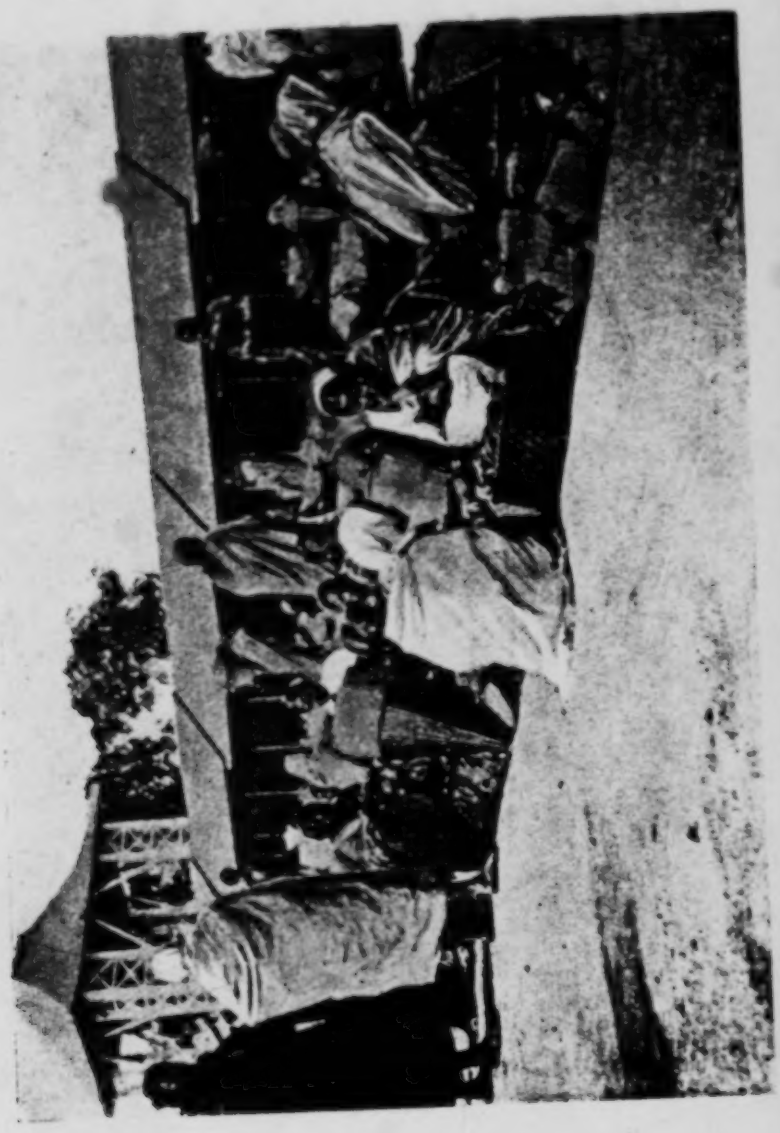

[704 F]

5:Stegmiller-12 M-4,5(no date)1928 AR7KhasiAR7

44:

[Tot. 9]

Schlagzeiler-13 8-mm-Kino-Tonfilme GRATIS!

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(Pic. 17

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443

[Fold 3]

must also be sought out and hired at the markets.(443

3. The Customs of the Market

a) The Preparation for Market. The sellers of both sexes normally carry their wares to the market themselves. They form smaller or larger groups and travel together. The wares are carried on their backs. The burden is packed according to its bulk or content. Larger objects, such as bamboo poles, beams, sugar cane, grass, and mats are carried without any covering by means of a forehead band plaited of reed grass (u stem). Smaller items, such as salt or potatoes, are packed in sacks; others such as betel nuts pepper leaves, fruit, vegetables, etc. are carried in baskets made of bamboo. The baskets are either pointed baskets which are round at the top or square baskets, which narrow to a point at the bottom but still are four feet long in size. The latter baskets are usually made with a cover, which, like the basket itself, is plaited and almost waterproof, so that flour or salt can be transported in them even during the rainy season. A round or oval object shaped like a shield, which in case of need is used as an umbrella (ka tray) and which is plaited out of bamboo, is inserted between the back and the burden (jingkit). On the one hand this object has the purpose of ameliorating the pressure of the burden and on the other hand it is pulled out in rainy weather to serve as an umbrella when it is held up against the rain by hand. [484] 443 482 438 285 443 [293]

With regard to the weight which the Khasi carry to market, the men carry about 100 and more pounds while the women seldom 482

482 laden themselves with more than 80 to 85 pounds.

484 Many Khasi have to start during the afternoon because of the great distance to the market. They spend the night with acquaintances. In the dark /706/ they march by torch light. The torches consist of several igra, i.e., very thin b mboo tube, saturated with petroleum and lighted. Or a large bamboo tube is filled with cloth that has been saturated in petroleum. The burning torches are swung in circles while the Khasi march so that only a glow is provided, but this prevents the torches from going out. The glow is quite sufficient for giving enough light for the road (foot path).

[276] Betel nuts are chewed [4] all the way and

4. The length of the road is also measured in "betel nuts."

water pipes are smoked during the rests.

943 b) The Market Place. It is not possible
361 to talk about a definite place where the Khasi usually hold the market. This varies considerably according to the region. First of all the place chosen for the market lies outside the village. By preference they hold their markets on high ground or some such safe place. A place that has once been chosen remaining the
[278] market place for that particular village. The market place is often found very close to the memorial stones, just as if the spirits of the ancestors honored there should offer aid and protection to the visitors to the market. On the southern slopes of the Khasi Mountains the market is often held on the bank of a river for the reason that the people come to these markets in boats. The market place in [illegible] is quite isolated. Also the one in

Laban, but there is a small wood near there. 443
The market place is also often found under 361
trees, at the edge of a forest or near the
memorial stones.

c) Market Huts. Usually the market is 443
held in the open air. Grass offers places 347
to sit as well as places for laying out the
wares. But in many places there are also
market halls or market huts. These are
simple halls, open on all sides, made with a
framework of bamboo poles and a roof of
straw or palm leaves. The market huts or
market halls are built with square corners
and have gabled roofs. They offer the women
sellers protection from the sun or rain only,
but no other comforts. Neither tables nor
chairs nor other arrangements for displaying
wares are there. On the side where the wind
blows these market halls are often covered
with bamboo mats.

d) Choosing the Place for Selling. 443
The choice of the place for selling is left 462
up to the seller. Yet a certain division can
be recognized at every market. This division
could be called a division according to sex.
In the middle the food stuffs are usually
sold which the women take care of. Utensils
and cattle which are the business of the men,
are sold at the edges. Therefore there is a
definite arrangement to the market which is
taken for granted by the Khasis: in the middle
the women, outside the men (there is a similar
order for the dance: in the middle the feminine
sex, outside the masculine sex). The indivi-
dual types of wares have their definite
places, although individual sellers are not
assigned definite places.

The women settle down at any place that 443
seems good to them after their arrival at the
market. They spread out in front of them the

443 food provisions which they have brought to sell. They sit close to each other and form long lines which double or treble when the market is heavily attended. There is little room for the visitors to the market, who must work their way through the wares that are spread out and through the women sellers who are sitting so close together. A woman seldom sits off to one side. Since there is no stealing at the market, sitting apart is also unnecessary, although a better view of the wares that are laid out for sale would be obtained.

The large objects, such as bamboo and beams are always set up on the outer side of the market and sold there even when the selling is managed by women (which is an exception).

443 805 e) Selecting the Time. 1. Choosing the market day. The Khasi have a week that is eight or four days long. Every eight (5) days

5. P.P. Stegmiller, "Pfeilschiessen und Jagdgebräuche der Khasi" /Arrow Shooting and Hunting Customs of the Khasi/, Anthropos, 1925, pp. 615 ff.

there is a large market and every fourth day there is a small market, always at the same place. The large and the small markets are also held daily, but at different places in a certain district. In this district or defined area the market days for the various villages are so determined that they never coincide with each other, and each Khasi can attend this market or that one as he wishes. The sequence of the markets is regulated so precisely that every Khasi knows exactly where a market is being held at the moment. The days are also named from the markets that are to be held. They do not talk about a Sunday or a Wednesday, but of the

eu duh (large market) in Shillong, in Nongkrem, 443
n Umlong, in Rangkheu, in Pomtiah, in Imnih, 805
etc. Thus each day is precisely established, and at the same time the market for the place concerned.

In the territory of the War the markets are held every fourth day in the following order: In Nongjiri, in Maubang, in Tyllap and in Shella. Here the week days are either named according to the market days or they say: the day before the market dy, the market day, the day after the market dy and the day between the markets. Every Khasi in this district knows then without any doubt which day is meant.

2. Determining the time of day. As concerns the tie of day during which the markets are held, no generally valid rule can be set up. This varies according to the individual places. In general from noon until late in the afternoon is the time for the chief market. The market paces are usually still empty before 10 o'clock in the morning. The end is about 5 o'clock in the afternoon, if not earlier.

The duration of the markets results from what has been already said. In general [706] the duration of a large market is about six hours, while a small market lasts only about four hours.

f) Order at the Market or Market Peace. 943
Although thee are no guards or other agents of 949
order on dut at the Khasi markets, the great peace and orer at even the largest Khasi markets seem most pleasant to everyone. I have never heard ny complaint of foodstuffs or other objects for ale being stolen. The Khasi consider the maket as something holy, as something to be respected, as something that belongs to everybody, which nobody can claim for his own. Attacks on a person's life also do not occur.

443 Quarrels and fights are exceptional. It is most
778 natural to the Khasi not to disturb the peace of the markets, since the markets stand under the protection of the goddess. (Cf. The prayer in the introduction to this article.)[1] Also the memorial stones, in the shadow of which the markets are so often held, may exert some influence on the visitors to the markets, since the Khasi imagine themselves to be protected by the spirits of their ancestors and believe that any kind of disorder at the market would be avenged by these spirits.

443 Nearly all the men at the market are armed.
484 The reason for this lies in the fact that the
911 people are thus protected on the way to the market and are safe from the attacks of the "killers" (nongshohnoh), i.e., those who got out to murder people in order to dedicate their victims to the devil snake. Therefore the visitors to the market never go alone but always in groups. The men are armed with the ka wait (a chopping knife), with which they know how to defend themselves very well.

4. The Law of the Market

443 a) The Market Toll. All sellers who at-
651 tend the market must pay a contribution on entering the market place. Only those inhabitants of the village or district in which the market is held are excepted. This market tax is paid partly in money and partly in products. In many villages it is paid only in cash. The amount of the tax laid is 2 or 3 paisas, often even one anna (5--8--10 pfennigs, German peace evaluation). Only betel nuts and pepper leaves are preferred to money. In many villages everything is paid in produce, insofar as foodstuffs are concerned. The market tax collector reaches

[1] [See ... ff 1-2--Author]

right into the carrying baskets of the arriving sellers with little ceremony and takes as much as he can with one or two hands. 443 651

Toll is levied at the approaches to the market. Here and there is a toll hut where the people passing must pay their contribution. These receipts belong to the king in whose kingdom the market is located. These market tolls often form very good sources of income for the royal families, as the markets are held regularly and are well attended. In return for the market tolls the king must maintain the market halls (if there are any).

[709] b) Market Coercion. There is no actual market coercion. But nothing can be bought outside of the market, since the Khasi do not have any stores. Only in the larger villages are there one or two shops, which, however, do not count. These shops must all pay the "market toll" for all the articles which they sell at home with the exception of the sale of kiad, "rice liquor," which is never sold at the market.

c) Prices and Measures. The prices are based on supply and demand. They are freely determined by the sellers. It is not the custom to bargain and haggle. An exception is the price for the daily rice, which often causes quarrels. The sellers sit by their wares without shouting or praising. The visitors come to the market, look at the wares, touch them, weigh them in their hands, and finally ask about the price. 437

If the prices seems to them to be too high, they put the wares back in their places and go their way without making any remarks.

Coins are used for paying. The Khasi have the following names for the English-Indian money: 436

436

4 sh'ing	equal	1	kynda
5 kynda	"	1	peisa or 3 damli
4 peisa	"	1	anna
16 anna	"	1	tyngka
15 tyngka	"	1	muhor ksiar equals 20.83 gold marks

804 The following norms are valid for wares sold according to weight:

4 suka	equals	1	tula
1 1/4 tula	"	1	katsha
5 katsha	"	1	shatak
4 shatak	"	1	pauwa
4 pauwa	"	1	ser
5 ser	"	1	pusari
8 pusari	"	1	mon
27 1/2 mon	"	1	ton equals 20 hundredweight

The following norms are valid for wares which are sold according to the square foot:

4 saudong	equals	1	kanda
20 kanda	"	1	shatak
16 shatak	"	1	katha
20 katha	"	1	bigha equals 120 square feet

The following norms are in general valid for wares which are sold by the piece:

12 tylli	equals	1	dorjon
20 tylli	"	1	kuri
5 kuri	"	1	soah (hundred)
24 tau	"	1	dista
20 dista	"	1	rim
10 rim	"	1	ring bah

/110/ The sale of oranges is an exception. 804
These appear on the market by the thousands. This fruit is sold by the spah, i.e., the hundred, but this is not to be taken literally. For the spah have various meanings according to the region. Thus the people on the Bogapani River (in Phali) sell according to the following system:

1	hali	equals	4 oranges
8	hali	"	1 bhar
100	bhar	"	1 spah, i.e., 3200 oranges

They are reckoned as follows in Shella:

1	gai	equal	6 oranges
5	gai and 2 oranges	"	1 bhar
4	bhar	"	1 hola
27	hola and 2 bhar	"	1 spah or 3520 oranges

The price for a spah varies from 10 to 40 rupees (tyngka), according to the amount of fruit that appears at the market. [435]

Quai leaves (tympeu) are sold according to the following scale:

2	sla	equal	1 jur
10	jur	"	1 khongshi
3	khongshi	"	1 blah
4	blah	"	1 tap
20	tap	"	1 kuri
4	kuri	"	1 shalia

But among the War the quai leaves are sold 435

435 in bundles. Each bundle is four bunches and each bunch has 48 leaves. The price for 10 to 20 bundles costs a rupee (tyngka) on the average. But when the rain stops and the dry season begins, the price climbs to 2.3 rupees and more. Four thousand to five thousand bundles of tympeu are sold daily at a well-attended market.